1;Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941
(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

FOLK BELIEFS, MEDICAL PRACTICE AND SHAMANISM

FOLK BELIEFS, MUSCULAR TREMORS, AND DREAMS

ALL items of belief are by no means of equal importance. They range in significance from the trivial to those basic for the ceremonies. Many of them are of no great moment and, indeed, may be uttered half in jest.

They say in the way of a joke that you get a rash from giving things and taking them back all the time. You have to put ashes on the rash, which is called "lice sew you up." If you are stingy, the person from whom you take things says, "I wish you'd get warts" [such warts should be cut off with sinew], or, "I wish you'd get the rash."

Sneezing, which indicates that "someone is thinking of you," may also be treated jokingly:

Upon sneezing, they say, "I am still here for you," or, "Sometime we will see each other again, sweetheart." Once two old men and I were together. One sneezed, and he made this remark. The other told him, "Nobody is thinking of you, you old fool! All that means is that you're catching cold."

Yet some regard the sneeze as an ominous sign and pray to the culture hero or exclaim, "May it be well!"

When the ear rings, "someone is talking about you," and young people think the speaker is one of their admirers. Some persons regard a frequent buzzing in the ear as a sign that good news will be heard; others say it is the calling of a dead relative. A burning sensation in the ear is a harbinger of cold weather.

Rings around the sun and moon indicate change of weather, rain, or snow. Rain will come if a horned toad or a snake is killed and turned on its back, if a dog rolls on the ground, if there is a good deal of drumming in the camps or much singing of masked-dancer songs. Smoke from a big fire kindled on a still night will cause clouds to gather. The crescent moon "is draining" when its tip is pointed downward, and rain falls. "A dark, heavy, pouring rain is male; a light rain when the horizon seems bright nevertheless is called female rain."

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372 We take a little stick of wood about eight or ten inches long. It has to be good solid wood and dry. It might be juniper or sotol. It is shaved thin—to about the thickness of a pencil. It does not come to a real point at the lower end but is rather blunt there.

[824] We have a flat piece of wood made of sotol stalk or yucca. It is thin. When it is to be used for the hearth, it has to be about one and a half inches wide and about eight to ten inches long. The one who is going to work the drill makes a little hole or notch in which to put it at the start, so it won't slip around. This little hole can be at the center or at the edge. If the drill goes right through the hearth without a fire being made, the person can start a new notch.

We go to a juniper tree and get the bark, the dry bark, and get some dry grass too. We keep these tied to the set and keep the whole thing dry. When using the drill, we put the grass or shredded bark around the hole, and some of it in the hole too. If we can't get a fire quickly, we put just a pinch of dirt or sand in the hole. As a man twirls the drill between his hands, the smoke comes up. Sometimes the tinder blazes up. If it doesn't blaze but you see that you have a good spark, you take the stick out of the hole, push the grass close together, and blow on it until you get your fire.

All you need is two sticks and your tinder. These two sticks are wrapped together and carried around, for these are the matches of the Chiricahua, you know. They are carried in a bag tied to the belt or in the quiver when the men are on a journey. Dry manure is used to catch the spark sometimes. Some men can get a fire in a very few turns, but some blister their hands trying to do it and give it up.

372 824 831 The designation of sotal and yucca as male and female, respectively—a concept which figures in the construction of the cradle—is extended by some (but not by everyone) to the parts of the fire drill:

> The same distinction between the "he" and the "she" is made when talking about the fire drill. The bottom part is supposed to be made out of the "she," the yucca stalk [narrow-leafed yucca],[17] and the top part, which is spun between the hands, should be made out of sotol, the "he."

372 [415] There are other ways of making and preserving fire. Sparks from flints can be caught in dry pulverized pith of such plants as the elderberry.[18] The flints and the powder are often carried in a buckskin bag, attached to the belt. In wet weather, when it may be difficult to rekindle a fire, a slow fuse of shredded juniper bark tied with yucca leaf strings proves useful:

[17] As the description above shows, this convention is not always respected.

[177] [18] Probably the use of flints and pyrites to make fire followed European contact.

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said of him, "That man never gets into trouble; he has a good wife." During my work with this man, his wife showed a lively interest and often assisted with useful suggestions and details. Not long afterward the man died, and she was truly a grief-stricken figure.

Another informant, despite the pose of male indifference, paid his wife a deserved compliment. Speaking of another woman with whom he had once been friendly, he said, "That woman was very pretty when I was a young man. I nearly married her, but I did right to marry my wife. She is a good little woman and has a good reputation."

At another time, when I inquired about a sound of wailing I heard, thinking that someone must have been newly bereaved, I was told, "No, that woman cries every once in a while like that for her husband who died many years ago. She has never married again."

One informant, irritated by insinuations that marriages among his people were not stable or satisfactory before American interference, exclaimed: "Some people think that, because the Chiricahua didn't have a license in the old days, their marriages were no good. But a man couldn't leave a woman for nothing. The Chiricahua had strict and high standards."

But no matter how satisfactory a marriage arrangement is, husbands and wives, as far as external symbols are concerned, are expected to take each other for granted and to demand no small attentions or extra considerations:

> A man does not kiss his wife or relatives. We don't show emotion like that. Young people dance together before marriage and now some kiss before marriage, but not after.
>
> The Chiricahua woman does not resent it when her husband goes off without saying goodbye or saying when he will be back, and there is no special greeting for a wife even if the man has been away several days. Yet these married people think just as much of one another as white people do. It's just their way of acting.

SEXUAL ADJUSTMENT

In speaking of the sexual adjustment in marital life, informants have emphasized the role of individual differences:

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831 I was talking about this with my friend, H. At that time I was young. When I saw a woman I'd have an erection. "What makes that?" I asked him. He said, "I get that way too." But there was another fellow. We used to chum together. You couldn't make him get an erection. You could have five naked women in front of him and it wouldn't matter! It's all in the nature of the individual. I have noticed that lots of fellows don't care for women, and lots are worse off than I was. It's in the brain, in the nerves. It's like some who get to be cigarette fiends when they smoke. It's just their nature to feed their bodies.

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These two fellows and I were together. H. and I used to go down to Lawton and go with girls. The other boy wouldn't do anything, though the girls were after him. He never even danced. Yet he's married now. He has only one child, a boy of about twenty.

831 833 In spite of the acknowledged individual differences, there is an accepted ideal of moderation in sexual life:

[152] The Chiricahua is not willing to show a lot of feeling for the other sex. That is why our women are probably colder than women of other races. They would consider it shameful to lose control of themselves during intercourse.[1]

833 Sexual intercourse two or three times a week is considered normal for married people. In the old days even less than that, because men were away so much. Yet some men are so bad about this that they get their wife with a second child before the first one walks, and the oldest child does not get proper nourishment.

833 829 The young Indians tell me about intercourse with women of other peoples, with Negroes, Mexicans, and whites, and they are surprised at the activity of these women during intercourse. One fellow said, "Well, I went into a place to have intercourse with a woman, but she had intercourse with me!" We say that those who are too fond of this get old quickly, that a person ages rapidly if he is just like a hog about it.

833 In an autobiographical statement, the same pattern of moderation is pictured:

> For the first three or four months I had intercourse every night with my wife; after that about twice a week; later on, after the first year, once a week or less. Now after eleven years of married life, when I'm home, about once a week. Once a week won't hurt a man, I guess.

831 833 593 183 But prudery and continence in the married person are just as heartily condemned and ridiculed as unbridled sensuality, as a humorous story indicates:

[1] Yet one informant expressed a contrary feeling concerning female sexuality, saying, "I've always heard that women are twice as eager as men, never getting enough of sexual intercourse."

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They tell this story of a certain man. They say he was J.'s grandfather. He married and when he and his wife went to bed the first night, he just turned away from her. She didn't think much of it at first. Then he did the same thing the second night. Every night she thought he was coming to her, but he turned the other way instead. He did this for seventy-five nights, and then she left him.

BIRTH CONTROL, BARRENNESS, AND FERTILITY RITES

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A childless marriage is considered a great misfortune, and sterility is an accepted cause for divorce. Sterility in a woman is sometimes attributed to a ceremony conducted over her in girlhood by envious or scheming adults.[1] But often a disappointed husband wonders whether his wife "has hired a man or woman who knows herbs and a ceremony to make her sterile, so that she won't be bothered by children:"

> I have heard old people say that some women can perform a ceremony for another woman, and she will have no children no matter how many men have intercourse with her. Girls of about the age of puberty go through it, and older women who have too many children go through it too. They have a medicine to drink and a ceremony that goes with it that will prevent birth forever. Certain people practice this ceremony. It has to be paid for like any other ceremony.

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Various methods for the prevention of pregnancy have been described. "Rock crystal is used as a medicine when a woman does not want a child. The rock is ground up fine, and some of the powder is put in a drink. There are prayers and a ceremony connected with this, but I do not know them." A certain variety of small prickly-pear cactus fruit, because it is rare and its fruits are said not to ripen, is magically associated with these practices.

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Food or behavior restrictions imposed as a part of such ceremonies must be carefully observed. "If a woman is avoiding pregnancy by keeping away from some food or drink, such as honey, and breaks this fast, she will become pregnant." It is noteworthy that honey should be specifically mentioned as one of the foods prohibited if a woman wants no children, for beeswax is said to be "used ceremonially to cure sterility in women."

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Because of the prevailing desire for children and the insecurity of a childless woman, fecundity ceremonies are of much more frequent occurrence. In one of these rites the practitioner cere-

[1] See pp. 80–81.

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This fear of the expression of evil wishes is an aspect of the belief that what is fervently voiced, for good or for evil, is likely to occur. It is a conception which gives point alike to the faith in the "good words" of ceremonialism and to the dread of "witch talk." 191 195 578

Invective is graduated from those exclamations and phrases which arouse mild resentment to those which are considered unforgivable insults. Rather innocuous, and directed as often at a situation as at a person, is an inexplicable cry of frustration, "Knife and awl!" "You're no good!" is likely to bring a more positive reaction if it is directed at a person. It is a stinging rebuke and challenge to be told, "You're no man!" Quite as insulting is it to tell a person, "You are trashy!" or, "Even though you are trashy, you ought to try to restrain yourself." Serious imprecations which rankle and are keenly resented have to do with death wishes and the underworld. "May an enemy [white man] kill you!" is one of these. The most common of this type is the malediction, "Go to the underworld!" "When some people get angry, they say, 'Go to the underworld!' It's just like telling a person to go to hell. That kind of talk is very bad and strong. People get killed for saying such a thing. You are considered to have a witch mouth if you talk like this." 195 578

Other curses have sexual or scatological implications: "A bad word is one that means 'your excrement!' If you use it to anyone, it will surely make him furious, and he might kill you for it." An incitant to physical violence is the threat, "I'll squeeze you so hard that I'll make your excrement move out!" An abusive phrase which was described as "the dirtiest cuss word in the Chiricahua language" inelegantly labels one's parents witches: "You for whom the witches copulated!" 195 578 831

But, in the eyes of many, the gravest insult is a combined curse and gesture, the ultimate in indignant response of a very angry woman: 195 578 831 201

If a woman gets very angry at anyone, she will double up her right fist with the palm up, put her thumb between the first and second fingers, and then open the fingers suddenly in the direction of another person, saying at the same time, "Smell this!" A man dreads this! It's just like shooting a man. It shows contempt. The word refers to her vagina.

2: Castetter and Opler N, E-5 (1931-1934)1936
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MESCALERO

PLANTS USED BY THE MESCALERO AND CHIRICAHUA APACHE FOR FOOD, DRINK, AND NARCOTICS

Foods

The stately Agave, a characteristic feature of desert vegetation of southwestern United States, constituted a very important source of vegetal food for these Apache. Several native species were utilized, but the most abundant one in the area was *Agave parryi*, commonly known as mescal or century plant (although these common names apply equally well to several other species). Contrary to popular opinion, the Agave bloom in much less than one hundred years; however, each plant blooms only once, after which the leaves wither and die. Around the dead plants are usually to be seen a number of young plants formed from suckers of the parent plant. It is from the food itself, known as mescal, prepared from *Agave parryi*, that the Mescalero Apache have been given their name *(28:*455).

Although not so extensively as formerly the Apache women still make expeditions to regions where Agave grows in abundance for the purpose of collecting the edible portions of the plant. These visits are usually made in late May or early June when the reddish flower stalks begin to appear and the plants are most palatable. Plants not blooming are known as "man" plants; those bearing a flower stalk are designated as "woman," and the Indians advise against using the "man" plants for food since they are bitter and spoil all mescal with which they are baked. This is because the "man" is smoking and the smoke permeates all the mescal in the pit. The "man" changes into "woman" when it flowers, then dries up and is gone.

The crowns of the mescal plants are dug out with three-foot sticks cut from oak branches *(Quercus* sp.) and flattened at the end. This end, when pounded with a rock into the stem of the plant just below the crown, permits the crown to be removed readily. A broad stone knife is used

4:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1947
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he comes. These articles have to be given to the shaman if the cure is to be a success. They are given before the ceremony really gets started. Pollen, turquoise, abalone, feathers, white shells, and a black-handled knife are among the objects which may be needed.

(See also *An Apache Life-Way*, p. 259.)

Whether or not he expects all of them as ceremonial payment, the shaman has a variety of ritual paraphernalia and substances on hand to be used in the ceremony: some combination of pollen, eagle feathers, abalone, turquoise, unblemished buckskin, animal parts, baskets, designed clothing, specular iron ore, a carved and designed cane or staff, yellow ochre, various other paints, plants, and medicines. The attitude toward some of these sacred substances and objects and the manner in which they are used are detailed thus by informants:

In my ceremony I use tule pollen at sunrise. The next night I use piñon pollen. The third morning at sunrise I use pollen from pine. The fourth day at noon I use sunflower pollen. All shamans use pollen. It stands for life and health. In a ceremony I saw Geronimo perform, he used pollen to make signs to the directions *and then put the pollen in the sick man's* mouth. He made crosses of pollen on the man's head, chest, right shoulder, back, and left shoulder.

Abalone has life. It has lots of good. Everything good is in it. Many shamans use it. Many of them say that without it they cannot carry on their ceremonies. When it is real blue inside it is male. This is the most powerful kind. When it is not the good color, when it is greyish, it is female. For my ceremony I polish the outside and use the scrapings for medicine. It is good for any kind of pain anywhere. It is also a protection against witches. I put some in medicine to cure lightning sickness too.[2]

[2] It is interesting to note that while abalone shell contrasts with turquois,[1], the representative of the male principle in Chiricahua religion, and stands for the female principle, abalone which is bluish inside is called "male" and abalone which is pinkish or whitish is termed "female." Evidently the alternation in both instances is due to a color-sex association, blue for male and a light color (pink, white, grey) for female.